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STEROID USE PRECAUTIONS (4/14)

Your doctor has prescribed a corticosteroid medication to help your problem. It may not be wise for you to take this if you are pregnant or have active infection, diabetes, severe high blood pressure, chicken pox exposure, psychiatric illness, stomach ulcers, previous tuberculosis, or osteoporosis.

Because steroids can affect many body systems, there are side effects you should be aware of and precautions you should take:

- Adhere to the dosage schedule your doctor has advised. Do not discontinue this medication without your doctor's advice. Abrupt withdrawal may result in serious complications.
- Because stomach ulcers are an occasional complication of steroid therapy, you should take 1 ounce of an antacid preparation like Maalox, Mylanta, or so forth with each steroid dose. Alternatively, you may take over-the-counter indigestion medications (*Pepcid-AC, Tagamet, Zantac*, etc).
- Avoid alcohol, nicotine and anti-inflammatory medication (aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen, *Motrin, Advil, Aleve, Lodine, Mobic*, etc). *Tylenol, Celebrex, Bextra*, and *Vioxx* are not a problem. These substances can aggravate ulcer symptoms, especially when taking steroids.
- Steroids may influence your mood, resulting in nervousness, insomnia, or just the opposite, a sense of well being.
- Steroids can influence your response to infection or injury. Should you develop an acute infection or have a severe injury, inform your doctor that you are taking corticosteroids.
- When taken for a short period, as prescribed, side effects are uncommon. Prolonged treatment at high dosages may result in some puffiness of the face; fullness in the back, neck, and shoulders; weight gain; increased bone fragility; acne; and increased facial hair.
- A rare, yet serious complication called avascular necrosis (AVN) of the hip, shoulder, arm, leg, feet, and hand bones has been associated with steroid use. More commonly, AVN is associated with conditions such as smoking, alcoholism, liver disease, gout, hyperlipidemia, or underlying blood vessel inflammation. Men between the ages of 30-50 are at greatest risk to develop AVN regardless the cause.
- Be aware that birth control pills may be less effective while taking steroids.
- Steroids can aggravate high blood pressure, diabetes, fluid retention, glaucoma and even reactivate dormant tuberculosis.